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Letter dated 6 December 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Belarus and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On behalf of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, we have the honour to forward the memorandum of the sixth forum on the sanctity of motherhood, held in Minsk, Belarus, on 14 and 15 November 2018 (see annex).

We would appreciate it if you could kindly circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 28 and 29.

(*Signed*) Valentin **Rybakov**
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Belarus
to the United Nations

(*Signed*) Vassily **Nebenzia**
Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation
to the United Nations

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Annex to the letter dated 6 December 2018 from the Permanent Representatives of Belarus and the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Russian]

Memorandum of the sixth forum on the sanctity of motherhood programme

The sixth forum on the sanctity of motherhood programme was held in Minsk (Republic of Belarus) on 14 and 15 November 2018 by the Saint Andrew the First-Called Foundation and the Karic brothers Foundation (Serbia), with support from the Minsk City Executive Committee and the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of the Republic of Belarus. The theme of the forum was "The family in today's world: significance, trends and outlook".

The forum was attended by more than 400 participants from 12 countries (Belarus, Russia, Serbia, Georgia, Israel, Iran, Kazakhstan, China, Poland, the Republic of Macedonia, Slovenia and the United States of America). The participants were leaders and representatives of non-profit organizations, government departments responsible for the development and implementation of family policy (on such matters as health, education and information architecture), pro-family non-governmental associations and corporations; scholars and experts in various fields related to family activities; and journalists specializing in family issues.

The forum, drawing on the longstanding social and cultural ties between Belarus, Russia and Serbia, was intended to highlight the importance of such cooperation for the preservation of family values and to engage participants from other countries.

The forum was held in response to the need to establish community and government partnerships to support the family.

One of the priorities mentioned by forum participants was to have coherent policies to strengthen the institution of the family, foster moral and spiritual family values in young people and develop a favourable environment for the birth and upbringing of children.

The forum aimed to draw the international community's attention to current ways and means to protect family values, marriage, motherhood and fatherhood and to support the exchange of experience and practical solutions that can help to strengthen the resilience of the family in today's world.

The substantive work of the forum consisted of six thematic sessions: (1) a round table entitled "You are not alone: experience in supporting motherhood"; (2) a round table entitled "Experiences and outlook for teaching family studies (family life education)"; (3) a round table entitled "Family-oriented information policy: experiences and outlook"; (4) an international workshop entitled "The role of volunteerism in the development of a family-oriented society"; (5) a round table entitled "Jurisprudence on family support: pressing issues and trends"; (6) a round table entitled "Donors and tradition: how companies support the family". The forum also included an academic and practical seminar on "Family reproductive health: current medical, psychological-social and ethical issues".

The participants in the forum were convinced that marriage and the family are universal institutions for all of humanity with inherent and unchanging characteristics and functions.

The model family structure involves two parents in a registered marriage. It includes multiple children (three or more), close and enduring intergenerational relations (three or more generations) and a favourable financial, moral and psychological situation, and the relationships between members are based on mutual care. Accordingly, the actions of all family-friendly entities should be designed to promote this understanding of the family and increase the number of citizens who seek to make it a reality in their lives, since an increase in the proportion of large families in society is a sine qua non for demographic growth and a vital element for the life of the State or society.

It is also imperative that the family should have internal autonomy to address family issues, and equality with other social institutions. It is important for pro-family efforts to be based on the following major principles:

The fostering of an understanding in society and in public policymaking of the importance of the family, both in terms of increasing fertility and in terms of the social, cultural and spiritual development of society;

Consistent efforts to raise public awareness of the sanctity of human life from the time of conception to the time of natural death;

The creation and implementation at all levels of education of programmes of academic and extracurricular activities to prepare students for family life;

Support for media projects that cultivate a positive image for large families;

The development and maintenance in a community and government partnership of family-friendly initiatives for young people (projects to support young people, large families, single-parent families, families with children with disabilities, and children deprived of parental care, and educational projects that promote family values and prepare young people for family life) including competitions, training seminars and support in the form of grants;

The promotion of family mediation, which is used to address legal, social-psychological and personal issues in out-of-court management and settlement of family disputes;

Participation in international initiatives in support of family values;

Recruitment of non-profit organizations and corporate entities to participate in projects in support of the family and motherhood.

The forum participants from Belarus, Russia, Serbia and other countries call on government and social entities to promote these provisions, both in countries where family values and marriage are enshrined in law, and in countries where there is potential for developing a dialogue between society and the State on the dynamic development of and support for family initiatives.

Minsk, Republic of Belarus
15 November 2018